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Talking Points for the DCI

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Iran-Soviet Relations

For over a year has sought improved relations with the USSR and recently accelerated these efforts.

Indicate that Tehran for some time has wanted to expand contacts and dampen the animosities resulting from the crackdown on the Communist Tudeh Party and the expulsion of Soviet diplomats in 1983.

Iran redoubled its efforts in March after the failure of its latest offensive against Iraq.

-- Growing domestic unrest, war weariness, and a deteriorating economy encouraged the Iranians to seek a way out of their diplomatic isolation.

-- They hope to gain additional arms and spare parts, economic aid, and Soviet pressure on Iraq. The Soviets have delivered limited amounts of small arms to Iran since the war began and have allowed their East European allies to provide larger quantities of such arms.

Last month, Gromyko met an Iranian deputy foreign minister in Moscow. The two sides agreed to future high-level political and economic exchanges.

-- The Iranians also reportedly agreed to reopen the Iranian-Soviet gas pipeline, although more bargaining probably is required on pricing.

-- Moscow, meanwhile, agreed to grant Iran special permission for use of Soviet airspace for flights to Egypt and Syria.

Despite these positive developments, a major upturn in relations, including substantial arms transfers, is unlikely.

-- Moscow will not want to jeopardize its relations with Iraq by providing major weapons systems, but probably calculates that Baghdad's dependence on Soviet arms is likely to limit its reaction to a modest improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations.

Moscow apparently believes it has the most leverage in the relationship with Tehran and seems determined to gain as many concessions as possible.

-- Iran has curtailed its anti-Soviet rhetoric and whitewashed its image from the walls of the Soviet Embassy.

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